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Study of the Aspects of False Friends of Translators

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ABSTRACT
This article refers to the meaning of the expression "False friends of translators" and the importance of this phenomenon in translation process. Moreover, the reader will be well informed about some opinions and theories expressed to this topic and the reasons why most of the translators are facing difficulties and should attend this concept carefully.

KEYWORDS: *false friend, translation, shared etymology, homonyms, pseudo-Anglicism, internationalisms.*

During the translation process, there is always the possibility of coming across some kind of challenges related to misunderstanding words. It means that most of the translators may digress to false friends. Translation process can be complicated by these kind of sneaky word and phrases. They can easily hinder the work of translators. This situation requires translators to be more attentive because it is possible for them to bump into these false friends along the way. Especially in formal translations, a seemingly trivial errors caused by false friends can create big mistakes and serious consequences.

What is False Friend?

In terms of the origin of the expression "False friends in translation", French linguists Maxim Koessler and Jules Derecquigny first introduced it in 1928. As time passed that expression was simply shortened to "false friends". False Friends are the words in two languages that appear to have similar phonetic form, but actually different meanings and origins. They are also known as bilingual homophones. Let us take the German word *enkel* as a clear example. This can be pronounced similar as an English word "ankle", which means the joint connecting foot to the leg. However, *enkel* is actually translated as "grandchild". Therefore, if we roll our ankle in Germany and for help with our *enkel,* we may confuse a few people. This is the concept that we could easily fall for and it makes us think whether it is the proper translation of a word from our native language or not.

As we can imagine, false friends cause the availability of several problematic situations not only for translators, but also it has effects in our daily life. One day, a man and a woman was eating out, the woman was Spanish, while the man was English. The woman said "*estoy embarzada!".* The man understood that she was embarrassed by the incident, but actually, she meant that she was pregnant by saying that Spanish expression.

There are also different types of false friend that every translator need to be aware of:

- Across different languages
- Within a single language
- Non-verbal communication

False friends across languages

These examples show the confusion that can arise when we try to use a word in a different language that sounds a lot like the original but means else entirely:

Cartoon – special films for children – not a box

Artist – painter – not a singer

Balloon – the rubber filled with air – not a wheel

Chef – cooker – not a boss

Brilliant – professional at something – not type of jewellery

Accurate – proper, clear – not tidy

List – a series of something – not a piece of paper

False friends within a language

Interestingly, False Friends can also be found within one language.

To use an English example, for an American person, "pants" means "trousers", whereas for a British person the same term means "undergarment".

Non-verbal false friends

To add another layer, False Friends can affect non-verbal communication as well. While a thumbs up is widely recognized as a sign of approval or agreement, it is taken as highly offensive thumbs down in some parts of the Middle East.

The most common mistake made by Poles spending their holidays in Bulgaria, for example, is the wrong interpretation of non-verbal confirmation or negation. In the Black Sea region, a single nod of one's head up means "no" while turning it from the left to the right means "yes".

Where do they come from?

Shared etymology

Sometimes it is the case where two languages give us common origins, but a word shifted meaning or acquired additional meanings over time. This can lead to the emergence of False Friends.

Let's take the word "Friend" as an example. This word is used for describing somebody who you care for a a Germanic term, leaving that open to include both family ties as well as relationships formed along the way. Scandinavian facsimiles like Swedish and Danish predominantly mean "relative" – a closer link than what friend has come to be understood in English.

Homonyms

Homonyms are the words which have the same spelling and the way of pronunciation, but different meaning and origin.

One of the examples is the Swedish word "rolig". This word means "fun". However, in Danish and Norwegian, this word is defined as calm, generally not the state in which we can display we are having fun

Pseudo-Anglicisms

There are the words in other languages that are formed with some English elements and may seem like in English, but actually not.

For instance, football is known in France as "baby-foot". Made up of two English words, it is impossible to find an alternative in the language it resembles.

Internationalisms

Internationalisms are other words or phrases that sound very similar or even identical in several languages. Unlike false friends, though, they have the same meaning.

Internationalisms are particularly apparent within languages of the same group, particularly the Romance and Germanic languages.

Common etymologies of a given word are linked to its earliest beginnings. European languages therefore contain a bevy of words of Latin or Greek origin, which can serve as excellent examples of internationalisms.

Take, for example, the Polish cywilizacja, German Zivilisation, Spanish civilización, and English civilization. As we can see, the word of Latin origin has taken very similar forms (both in graphic and phonetic terms) in several languages while retaining its original meaning.

As a conclusion, the effect of False Friends should always be taken into consideration by translators. We saw that wrong usage of these types of words can cause misunderstanding in our daily conversation and even different cultures. When it comes to the translation process, these could easily confuse readers. So, translators are always required to be more conscientious and for that, they should have enough vocabulary range.

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